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Purple Hearts and Valor

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By Capt. Bruce Meneley, commanding officer, NATO Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit, Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Purple Heart medals are displayed on top of a Quilt of Valor. The military awards and quilts were given to injured service members at the NATO Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit, Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Every day essentially the same scene plays out here. The hospital Tactical Operations Center (TOC) is notified of inbound casualties and pages the trauma and operating room teams. Staff member's pagers notify them as they are around the hospital, in their barracks or at the gym, causing them to rush for the doors to get to the trauma bays before the casualties arrive. Final preparations are quickly made as ambulance crews head for the flight line, helicopters roar in overhead, flare and land; our crews off-load the casualties and speed them to the ambulance bay. Often they arrive straight from the point of injury covered in dirt, blood, sticks and leaves; exposed bones and shredded flesh, cleared of weapons and explosives the teams swoop in to rush them in for resuscitation.

Surgeons gather round the wounded to triage the order for the operating rooms and which personnel and instruments are needed. They prioritize the intra-abdominal bleeding, the gunshot wound to the chest, the amputations, the head trauma, the list goes on. Coming from the operating rooms they patients almost look fresh and clean, betrayed only by the red blood already seeping through white bandages.

The intensive care unit nurses get them settled in, monitors and intravenous fluids adjusted as night falls and the nightly routine begins. A Quilt of Valor (http://qovf.org/ with the mission "To cover all those wounded warriors with both physical and psychologically wounds with a Quilt of Valor") is gently placed on them, the generals and members of their units come to honor their service and sacrifice, a purple heart laid on the quilt, a memory book signed,

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February 2015 (16)

January 2015 (12)

December 2014 (17)

Senior leaders sign a memory book in honor of wounded service members at the NATO Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit, Kandahar, Afghanistan.

farewells said, tears shed and back into battle.

Rocket attack sirens wail as the work continues behind 18-inch thick concrete walls, surgeons in the operating rooms toiling through the night. Air Force evacuation crews arrive to carry away the wounded as a new day dawns, tired crews go home to sleep. Then the pagers begin to beep again.

It is indeed our honor and privilege to tend to the Nation's wounded, our American heroes, and I am humbled in their presence. I don't know that I could muster the courage they display on a daily basis. I can honestly say there is nowhere else in the world I would rather be than right here right now leading this exceptional crew.

← Next post Previous post →

Judie Yates
I was so touched by this article. Occasionally in my day-to-day activities I think I am spending too much time on the computer doing my small part in the Quilts of Valor mission. Then something like this pops into my mailbox and I am moved to tears, ashamed of myself and then re-energized and re-committed to doing what I do no matter how trivial or how time consuming. Thank you all for all that you do for us. We are truly blessed to live in this great nation, bruised as I believe it currently is. If we would all contribute at the level that you do what an awesome nation we could be once again.

With deepest gratitude for those who serve,
Judie Yates
Mountain House, CA
Longarm/Topper Coordinator

Jo Anna Gorthy
Bless you and the work you are doing for our freedom. Thank you for being away from your loved ones and families and may you all be reunited soon.

November 2014 (11)
October 2014 (15)
September 2014 (20)
August 2014 (14)
July 2014 (13)
June 2014 (8)
May 2014 (11)
April 2014 (9)
March 2014 (14)
February 2014 (7)
January 2014 (7)
December 2013 (7)
November 2013 (12)
October 2013 (7)
September 2013 (14)
August 2013 (13)
July 2013 (11)
June 2013 (22)
May 2013 (15)
April 2013 (14)
March 2013 (14)
February 2013 (14)
January 2013 (12)
December 2012 (11)
November 2012 (11)
October 2012 (7)
September 2012 (9)
August 2012 (12)
July 2012 (13)
June 2012 (17)
May 2012 (22)